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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP
NSC FOR J.BADER, IO/RHS FOR KESHAP

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KISL ID

SUBJECT: GOI RECEPTIVE TO U.S. "FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION"
INITIATIVE

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: IO/RHS Director Keshap recently visited Jakarta. Keshap met with senior GOI officials to garner support for a draft resolution on "Freedom of Expression" to be tabled at the upcoming UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session. The GOI indicated support for U.S. proposals aimed at ameliorating negative "West versus Islam" dynamics at the UN and in other bodies. Working within the context of the developing U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership, Keshap exchanged ideas on how best to broaden and deepen cooperation in multilateral arenas. END SUMMARY.

PRESSING "FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION" INITIATIVE

¶2. (C) IO/RHS Director Atul Keshap and a team from U.S. Mission in Geneva and DRL visited Jakarta, August 31-September 1. Keshap met with senior GOI officials to garner support for a resolution on "Freedom of Expression" to be tabled at the upcoming UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session. In terms of background, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) member-states (like Indonesia) have repeatedly adopted broad-stroked resolutions designed to ban any speech that insults or disparages religion. In turn, the U.S. has always opposed these resolutions because they are contrary to First Amendment protections on freedom of speech and expression. This has led to an unproductive, sterile debate.

¶3. (C) Following President Obama's Cairo speech and in anticipation of the U.S. returning to the UNHRC this fall, however, the USG has worked on a "middle ground" approach to the freedom of expression/defamation of religion issue. Keshap and his team presented Indonesian officials with this approach during the visit.

GOI IS RECEPTIVE

¶4. (C) Indonesians were generally receptive to the USG initiative. Ambassador Rezlan Janie, Director General for Multilateral Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs, responded positively as did the other officials. According to Rezlan, Indonesia viewed U.S. participation on the UNHRC as a positive step forward in promoting and protecting human rights. Rezlan added that the GOI wanted to see a new tone on the defamation of religion debate, which was previously marked by acrimony and harsh rhetoric. In response to Keshap's briefing on the proposed text, Rezlan was upbeat and asked to review the draft text as soon as it was ready to be shared with GOI officials. (Note: The text, in part, is designed to bridge the divide on the defamation of religion issue by focusing on countering religious stereotyping.)

WORKING TO IMPROVE COOPERATION IN MULTILATERAL ARENAS

¶15. (C) Janie explained that the GOI was pleased to have the opportunity to showcase U.S.-Indonesia cooperation on such matters. He expressed the hope that such cooperation would be another step toward broadening the possibilities for dialogue between U.S. and Indonesian representatives in Geneva, New York and elsewhere. (Note: A key part of the developing U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership, is working to put in place a strategic dialogue with Indonesia on key regional and international issues, including Burma, Iran, and North Korea. Cooperative efforts in multilateral arenas such as the United Nations is a key strand of this effort.)

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